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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY China/USSRSUBJECT Military and Economic Conditions
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- Q. What industrial plants were observed along the rail route? Where were these plants located? Did these plants appear to be new or old?
- Q. What new building construction was noted? Were these warehouse or industrial plant structures?
- A. Near the Antung area I didn't see many. I don't say there weren't any there but I didn't see them. After we had passed Baikal Lake, somewhere within five or six hours - we had no watches or maps - on the right-hand side of the railroad there had been huge steamshovels at work and an embankment of earth had been put up. Two things were going on there. They were building something inside that embankment and outside, the river was being dredged as if it were being prepared for navigation. It was such a huge piece of work that I was very much impressed. I didn't keep track of locations. Later on we came to three big developments which were at the junction of the Siberian railroad and the river, after we had come across another long stretch of flat-land. The first was at the town of New Siberia and it extended for miles on both sides of the river. I am not sure about directions. We came down along

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one side of the river and there were these enormous structures. So many trains were moving by in both directions that I couldn't see all of them. There were rows and rows of new apartment houses for the workers. Some of the factories were of all shapes. Some seemed to be refineries and had big pipes that extended for several city blocks. I cannot remember the exact locations of these plants. None of them was old. Some may have been three or four years old but the impressive thing about the whole scene was the newness of it. Some of them were warehouses. Along the line I saw what appeared to be tremendous grain elevators, very tall ones; I would say 10 stories high.

- Q. What was the speed of the train on which you travelled?
- A. The trains in China were far superior to the one we rode in Russia, and ran at a speed of around 35 miles an hour. However, since I didn't have a watch to time it, I can't be positive of this. We changed trains at Mukden and at Manchouli. The Russian train was older and slower and I judge its speed was between 20 and 25 miles an hour. The Siberian railroad must be a constant problem to them. The road bed seemed to be in poor condition and this was the situation all the way through to the Ural Mountains. We were told that this railroad was double-tracked all the way but part of the time we were switched off to a branch line that was only single-track. I don't know whether this was because they didn't want us to see something that was going on along the main route or whether they were repairing the road. Whenever we went downhill the engine had the brake on all the way. There were great groups of people out working on the roadbeds all throughout Siberia. They were working at great pace and in some places, in order to keep the trains moving, they would have to go over it twice, first temporarily then a second time to put down the ballast, etc. I think the long winter and heavy frost is a constant problem in keeping the railroads open. There was the feeling in my mind that the engineer was uneasy about the road bed all the way across Siberia. Apparently, keeping the railroads in shape is a matter of great urgency and importance to the government, else there would not have been so many people all along the route working on the roadbeds. I don't know whether it was draft labor or hire but in any case living accommodations that were semi-permanent were provided for them right alongside the tracks. These were large boxcars converted into homes. Steps had been installed and there were antennas up for radios and some of them had swings up for the children underneath the cars.

We travelled on coal-burning trains and I saw nothing but coal-burning trains until after we passed the Ural Mountains. From there on into Moscow there were sections where the trains were electrified and moved faster. There were little railroad yards that had been electrified and they had electric switch locomotives. We saw Russian soldiers doing construction work all along this portion of the railroad. All of the workers wore uniforms except the lowest grade laborers. Women were working right along with the men. They were doing most of the section work. I only saw one woman on the switch engine, though, and I don't know whether or not she was an engineer. Electrification is still limited, although from the amount of work going on they will have the entire line from the Ural Mountains west electrified. They were building steel towers at intervals, and we saw places where soldiers were encamped and they would be moving around like regular engineers rebuilding and repairing in some places but primarily digging holes for the electric towers. I was very much interested in the railroad work because I used to work on railroads 25 or 30 years ago.

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- Q. How many trains were seen per day moving in the opposite direction? What were they carrying?
- A. On the main road I would say that there were anywhere from 30 to 60 trains a day passing us. I was much impressed with the amount of materiel and all the freight and the military units on the move. These appeared to be fully equipped as if they were operating on a war-time basis. They were transporting trucks and big guns, but just how many I can't say. There were always visible guards with guns riding the materiel cars. There was a tremendous amount of heavy industry machinery, and raw iron and great amounts of sheet metal and girders. They were also moving great quantities of agricultural implements, including tractors. In Siberia I saw very few tractors and not much improved agriculture. Once we crossed the Ural Mountains the cultivation program increased. After we passed the Ural Mountains we saw whole cars full of plows, harrows, and other machinery. There was also a lot of cheap low-grade coal and blowers, probably for industrial furnaces. And there was a great amount of lumber being carried. Incidentally, I noticed that throughout Siberia and up until we crossed the Mountains there was more birch than any other kind of tree although there were some cedars and pines. Then after we crossed the Mountains there were miles and miles of planted evergreen and cedars, two rows of them. The row nearest the tracks had the tops trimmed off so that it gave me the impression of a step-like formation.
- Q. What was the approximate size of the tank cars observed en route? How many tank cars were observed and what was the most common size?
- A. I was amazed at the size of the tank cars. I would say they were almost twice as big as ours. They were all that size. The railroad tracks are wider than ours. I couldn't begin to estimate the number that we saw.
- Q. What evidence did you note of the construction of communications facilities?
- A. The first thing we noted was at regular intervals there were tremendous masts with wires. Whether they were jamming or relay stations I don't know. Just after we had crossed the Ural Mountains there was a seven-story tower. Two days before we reached Moscow there were great wooden towers with nothing else around them but steps leading to the top. I was amazed at the variety of supports for high tension wires. I don't see how they kept track of them. Some were made of old posts and some of iron girders. There were high power tension wires everywhere west of the Ural Mountains. As we approached Moscow I noticed that in small clusters here and there were television antennas. There would be a group of them near a factory, for instance. All in all I saw six or seven different types of these antennas. I heard some conversation in the dining car that there was a struggle going on in East Germany for control of the television air and that the Russians were now experimenting with television so they could take over.
- Q. Did you note any evidence of rolling stock shortages?
- A. There didn't seem to be any great shortage because we saw a great number of locomotives and cars that didn't appear to be in bad shape. They were off on a siding. There were some old museum pieces for switch engines and I was impressed with the way they were able to keep those old locomotives going. There were repair yards along the tracks where they almost rebuilt cars right out in the open air. I

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saw some that had been in wrecks and they practically rebuilt them entirely. Among the military equipment being transported there were some objects like railroad cars but just the floor of the car with the axles sticking out. There were 15 of these on this shipment and in another open freight car were the wheels. Although I can't give any definite figures because I saw so much in such a short time, my impression is that they are not suffering any shortage of rolling stock.

8. Q. Did you have any delays or tie-ups? If so, for what reasons?
- A. We were on what they considered a fast run. It took us seven days but they said it used to take 10 or 12 days across Russia. We stopped every three or four hours for about 20 minutes all the way. Before we reached the Ural Mountains we seemed to be proceeding very cautiously and so were the freight trains. Once past the Mountains the freight trains made no stops that I saw. Our stops were at stations and I don't know why they were made.
9. Q. What types of freight cars were in use and where? Two-axle or four axle? Capacity?
- A. They were very much like ours and the construction appeared to be like ours. My impression was that all the freight cars had four axles, two front, two rear. I saw some that had carriers underneath. Most of them looked like ours but some had two bumpers on the rear end.
10. Q. Did you note any loading practices?
- A. After passing the Ural Mountains I couldn't help but feel impressed by the amount of movable cranes. In the big industrial centers there were many of them, but I don't remember any right down at the railroad tracks. There were the loading platforms that looked like ours and loading onto the cars by men with small trucks and hand carts. It reminded me of home.
11. Q. Is the Harbin-Suifenho railroad line single, double or triple tracked?
- A. I think it was all double tracked. At one stage we were shunted off to a single track line on a very wide road-bed, probably because they didn't want us to see that particular section of the main line.
12. Q. Did you note any signs of civil defense activity?
- A. I saw nothing that looked like it to me. No signs for air-raid shelters.
13. Q. Did you see any signs of forced labor activity?
- A. There was no way of knowing whether the labor was forced or not. I didn't see any guards standing around with guns or any indication that the workers were prisoners. Most of them wore uniforms.
14. Q. Did you see any signs of labor migration or transfer.
- A. We saw tremendous transfers of railroad labor gangs. And there were large groups of soldiers being moved with military and engineering equipment. It all seemed to fit in with all the construction work that was going on.

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- Q. Did you see any evidence of new workers' living quarters?
- A. Yes, and it was interesting to see the distinction between the homes for the different workers. Coming in on the far eastern side of Russia the houses were mostly log cabins. There were whole rows of prefabricated houses, small and some of them were without doors and some without windows. They had lights and white paint around the window frames but almost none of them looked attractive. The farmers and people not directly connected with the industrial plants lived in these. But in every area where the new factories and plants were erected or being erected they were building 2-3 story apartment houses, nearly all of them being covered with asbestos. Most of these were made of cement but some were of wood. They were putting in sidewalks around them and making them rather attractive. But in no place where there was not a large industrial plant were the houses anything special. The shacks and huts looked as they might have looked a hundred years ago but they seemed to be going to a lot of trouble to impress their own people with the advantages of being an industrial worker. Even outside Moscow in the villages there were no sidewalks or pavements, just mud roads with grass growing here and there, and the houses were little log cabins. We were very near to Moscow before we saw any automobiles and the roads were not anything decent until as near as 30 or 40 miles to the city. I don't know what type of trucks or vehicles could go over the roads, they were so bad. The Russians have a great deal to do.
- Q. Do you have any knowledge of wage rates and/or methods of payment?
- A. I only know that the waitress in our dining car is paid three thousand rubles a month, and the lady manager of our car, a Jewess, said her salary was four thousand rubles a month. She told me, incidentally, that at first Communism was very difficult but it really wasn't so bad. Tipping is not allowed but our group made a pool and gave 15 rubles apiece to the man and woman in charge of our car. Both were very friendly and would bring us in little cakes for which we paid 2½ rubles apiece. Also, there were on our train some men who were engineers. One of them had formerly been in the Army and he spoke German. The amount of money he spent on that trip for vodka and champagne was unbelievable. There were others in the dining car who spent from 120 to 130 rubles on one meal. So, there are some good salaries being paid in Russia.
- Q. Did you note any labor shortages? Have you any information on the availability of consumers' goods?
- A. I didn't see anything that indicated there was a labor shortage.
- Every time the train stopped I got off to look around and make some purchases. As soon as we had crossed the border into Russia we were on our own, so to speak, and an official of the tourist bureau gave me four thousand rubles to pay for meals on the train or anything else. There was plenty of food and consumer goods to be had at the larger railroad stations and it was cheaper than food in the dining car. These are prices for the articles I remembered for sale in the stations:

Can of crushed pineapple (advertised "Same as bought in Hawaii") - 8 rubles
Bar of hand soap - 1-1/2 rubles
Fountain pen (the one dollar kind) - 20 rubles

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Vodka (small bottle) - 16 rubles
 Port Wine - 20 rubles
 Lemon -(small & withered) - 4 rubles
 Shoes (On ration) - Men's -120 to 400 rubles
 Women's -150 to 300 rubles
 Children's -30-40-80-100 rubles
 Dish of ice cream - 1 ruble
 Glass of fruit juice - 80 kopeks
 One fish (flounder) about 1-1/2 lbs. - 9 rubles
 Large sugar cookie - 1 ruble
 Small sugar cookie - 85 kopeks
 Bottle of beer - 5 rubles
 Bottle of black ale - 3 rubles
 Soda water - 3 rubles
 Eggs (1) - 1 to 1-1/4 rubles
 Bottle of milk - 2 rubles
 Cheese, 1/4 lb. slab - 8 to 10 rubles
 Apple (1) - 5 rubles
 Pocket Knife - 8 to 15 rubles
 Magazines - 2 to 4 rubles (all issued by Central Government)
 German-Russian Dictionary - 8 rubles
 Suitcases - 12-15-18 rubles (poor quality)
 Suit of clothes - 120 rubles and up

18. Q. Do you know any prices of rail tickets or meals? Postal or freight rates?

A. My railroad ticket from Manchouli to Moscow, first class, was 1450 rubles. Second class is 1150. Regular food, such as meat and potatoes, was cheap. We could get that for from 5 to 7 rubles.

Bread and butter - 80 kopeks
 Cup of coffee - 85 kopeks
 Cup of cocoa - 75 kopeks
 Dish of rice - Slightly more than 1 ruble
 Three eggs, fried or boiled - 3 rubles, 75 kopeks
 Sirloin steak - 5 rubles, 75 kopeks
 Glass of apricot juice, imported - 4 rubles
 Small jelly roll - 2-1/2 rubles
 Small piece of cheese - 4 rubles

I have no information on postal or freight rates.

19. Q. Do you know of any instances of rationing? If so, what items and to what extent?

A. I know the shoes were rationed from seeing them on sale in the stations. I also noticed that different classes of people wore different kinds of shoes. There didn't seem to be much choice in style, but I noticed that the lady manager of our car wore shoes that were of better quality than the waitress in the dining room, and the man manager wore shoes of better quality than the porters but not so good as most of the passengers. The lady manager said that a person got what he was entitled to and by that I presume she meant according to his class.

20. Q. Have you any information about the availability of communications facilities to the general public?

A. I have practically no information about this except that I saw radio masts all over the country from the Ural Mountains on in, and most of the houses seemed to have electricity. I did not see telephone wires or poles.

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